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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/620,411	07/16/2003	Richard Craig Estey	55632.107561	9611
27526	7590	04/16/2007		EXAMINER
BLACKWELL SANDERS PEPPER MARTIN LLP				RENDON, CHRISTIAN E
4801 Main Street				
Suite 1000			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
KANSAS CITY, MO 64112				3714
SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE		MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS		04/16/2007		PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

ED

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/620,411	ESTEY, RICHARD CRAIG	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Christian E. Rendón	3714	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 July 2006.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-29 and 31 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-29 and 31 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on 16 July 2003 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some * c) None of:

1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Amendment

1. This office action is in response to the amendment filed July 26, 2006 in which applicant has amended claim 1, added claims 21-29 and 31, and responded to the claim rejections. Claims 1-29 and 31 are still pending.

Claim Objections

2. Claim 31 is objected to because of the following informalities: claim 30 is missing from the numerical listing of the claims since it was miss-typed as claim 31. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-2 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Boushy et al. (US 5,761,647) and further in view of Bentz ("Affiliate Marketing: does It Work? Should You Get An Affiliate Program? Is It Worth It?").

3. Computer systems inherently contain a computer readable storage medium for storing operating systems, computer programs and other data structures like databases. Regarding claims 1 and 21, Boushy teaches a player tracking system (PTS) (Boushy: Abstract) comprising of a database (Boushy: col. 4, lines 48-50) operated by a central computer system (Boushy: col. 2, lines 9 & 24). The PTS system stores player profiles in its database after establishing that the player meets a predetermined criterion set by the

casino, like the player's level of profitability (Boushy: col. 4, lines 60-65). The system tracks and records each player's gaming and non-gaming activity (Boushy: col. 2, line 7), which is collected by the PTS database and associated with each player's profile information. After a gambling establishment ('casino A') creates a profile for a player, the data is shared through a centralized database on a network with other affiliated establishments for the purpose of offering cross-property incentives (Boushy: col. 2, lines 10-17). Therefore when an establishment ('casino B') receives a new or recruited player that has a profile in the database, the system sends 'casino B' the profile that was created by 'casino A' or the sponsor of the player (Boushy: col. 9, lines 22-25), which [the sponsoring casino] is also recorded in the profile (Boushy: col. 3, lines 18-19). The PTS also offers ongoing benefits typically in the form of "comps" to the player based on the gaming activity of the player (Boushy: col. 3, line 1). Furthermore, Boushy provides the complimentary gifts and benefits like a complimentary room (Boushy: col. 8, line 53) in order to provide a more enjoyable experience and to provide the player's with an incentive to join the system in exchange the casino's ability to monitor and track their play of gambling games. The PTS also incorporates a marketing system (Boushy: Fig 3) to provide data to all of the affiliated establishments who will develop and monitor (Boushy: col. 2, lines 17-21) cross-property incentives programs and comps that are personalized to the player (Boushy: col. 2, lines 57-60).

4. Boushy discloses a relationship between a player and an affiliate of casinos. A player benefits from this relationship since they still have the chance to 'try out' a different establishment while still collecting points towards various 'comp' benefits. The affiliate of casinos benefits from the relationship by sharing within their 'circle' loyal 'high rollers.' In other words, one casino recruiting a current customer, who has a history of spending lots

of cash towards collecting 'comp' benefits, for another casino. Boushy fails to disclose any specifics towards rewarding a relationship between a casino player sponsoring or recruiting another individual for a casino.

5. The method disclosed by the applicant is a commonly known practice in the marketing and advertising markets and is better known as a multi-tiered affiliate advertising and marketing program. Bentz teaches in an article with regard to affiliate programs explaining the benefits of how these systems can improve the revenue and success of a product (Bentz: "what makes an affiliate program so powerful?"). These systems typically begin with a company (i.e. a casino) who has a product (i.e. casino games) asking their affiliate (i.e. *sponsored player*) to refer customers (i.e. *recruited player*) to them as a form of free advertising. The affiliate is paid or rewarded a percentage of the profits or commissions for every purchase the referred customer makes since the customer's account is associated with the affiliate's account (Bentz: "For the Business/Supplier" & "For the Affiliate").

6. One of ordinary skill would be motivated to incorporate this type of advertising system into the already existing advertising system of Boushy as another form of marketing and advertising that would promote an increase of revenue by providing incentives to casino players who introduce new casino players to the establishment (Boushy: col. 2, lines 17-21 & 57-60). Therefore it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to implement a multi-tiered affiliate program into the advertising system of Boushy to be used in conjunction with the player tracking system.

7. Regarding claim 2, the Examiner takes OFFICIAL NOTICE that manual bookkeeping and player tracking are antiquated variants of player tracking system are old and well known in the art at the time of the invention.

Claims 3-20, 22-29 and 31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Boushy et al. (US 5,761,647) and Bentz as applied to claims above, and further in view of Messer et al. (US 2004/00111381 A1).

8. Regarding claims 3-7, 9-10, 22-24 and 26-27, Boushy et al. teaches a player tracking system that incorporates the use of monitoring and tracking a players operation in a casino. Additionally, Boushy teaches the use of a central patron database (Boushy: col. 4, line 48) that enters and monitors new and existing player accounts. These accounts are updated with information relating to a player's gaming activity and monitored to see if they are eligible for complimentary gifts or benefits (Boushy: col. 2, lines 65-67; col. 3, line 1). Furthermore, the system is linked to the advertising and marketing divisions of the casino however is silent with regards to different embodiments of marketing/advertising methods in the marketing/advertising arts. Bentz teaches the basics of a multi-tiered affiliate method and teaches the advantages of incorporating such a method to improve the revenue of a product (*i.e. casino games*). However, Boushy and Bentz are silent with regard to the operations that a system might implement when using an affiliate program that tracks the hierarchical relationship between a sponsor and its referrals in a computer system (Messer: par. 4, lines 7-9).

9. Messer et al. is an analogous computer system patent that teaches the implementation of an affiliate program into a communication network. Messer establishes a hierarchical relationship between the affiliates or sponsored players and the users or the recruited players (Messer: par. 23, lines 5-7; par. 24, line 3). The affiliates provide links to Merchant sites on relevant websites for Internet users to click, creating traffic and a possible sale on the Merchant site. A fellow Merchant site can also play the role of sponsor

for another Merchant site (Messer: par. 34; par. 29, lines 3-5). In other words, a new member or player can become a sponsoring member. Once a referred user makes a purchase or any profitable activity, the sponsor receives a commission for that referral (Messer: par. 22, lines 11-12). Additionally, an incentive is made to new vendors who enter into the multi-tiered affiliate network (*i.e.: the commissions are generated as added into the network*) (see [0038-0054]).

10. Regarding claims 12-13 and 29, Messer teaches a method wherein the commission (*i.e. complimentary benefits*) are associated with qualified referrals (*i.e. gaming activity*) participated in by direct and indirect recruits beyond a minimum volume, wherein a recruit's gaming activity volume is a running sum of the value of all qualified referrals (*i.e. gaming activity*) (see paragraph [0004-0006], [0022]).

11. Regarding claims 14-16 and 30, Messer teaches populating the vendors (*i.e. sponsoring member*) of an existing vendors profile with information identifying a sponsoring vendor (*i.e. member*). Additionally, the system is adaptable to change the sponsoring member to identify a different member (see [0007-0009]).

12. Messer also teaches that one would be motivated to use this type of multi-tier affiliated system to allow for an enhanced product access to users. Therefore it would have been obvious one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention incorporate the system taught by Messer with Boushy and Bentz as a means to incorporate a PTS that implements a multi-tiered affiliate player system.

13. Regarding claims 11 and 28, Boushy teaches a qualified gaming activity is based on at least one of the following: the sum of all wagers placed by a player, the sum of all winnings associated with all wagers placed by a player, a configurable combination of a

player's wagers and winnings, the net winnings associated with a player, and other qualified spending by a player (see col. 9: lines 4-67).

14. Regarding claims 8 and 25, Boushy teaches a method wherein the offered complimentary benefits for each level are selectable and based on a mathematical formula (see col. 9: lines 50-col. 10: lines 18).

15. Regarding claim 17, Boushy teaches a method of a player tracking system that operates in the environment of a single casino (see CMS [234(1-4)] of Fig. 5 and the related description thereof).

16. Regarding claim 18, Boushy teaches a method of a player tracking system that is extended to accommodate multiple locations of a gaming organization (see 'patron database' [212] and 'casino management systems (CMS)[234] of Fig. 3 and the related description thereof, col. 4: lines 30-45).

17. Regarding claim 19, Boushy teaches a method of a player tracking system that is extended to accommodate multiple locations of organizations affiliated with a gaming organization (see Fig. 5 and the related description thereof).

18. Regarding claim 20, Boushy teaches a method of a player tracking operating within a gaming organization which includes a casino, a race track, a dog racing track, a horse racing track, a sports betting organization, a bingo hall, and a lottery as well as a bar, a retail store, and other facilities where legalized gaming is permitted (see 'CMS [234], LMS [238], SMS [262] of Fig. 3 and the related description thereof').

Response to Arguments

19. Applicant's arguments filed July 26, 2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. As stated above Boushy clearly states a motivation for implementing new forms of referral advertisement and marketing that would promote an increase of revenue

by providing incentives to casino players who introduce new casino players to the establishment (Boushy: col. 2, lines 17-21 & 57-60). The Office would also like to state that this rejection is still valid since the claim language remains broad and are interrupted reasonably. The following terms are comparable: 'player' and casino, person, user, member and any other term that describes an entity that is involved & influential in an activity. The same is also considered for 'gaming activity' and product sales, profit, comps, commission and any term that describes acquiring money since a casino makes a profit when a person plays the casino games or 'gaming activity.'

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Walker (US 6,193,608 B1) – Method for Motivating Players to Return to a Casino Using Premiums.

Cumbers (US 6,142,876) – Player Tracking and Identification System.

Fertitta, III et al. (US 6,302,793 B1) – Multi-property Player Tracking System.

Roser (US 2002/0082076 A1) – Systems and Methods wherein Multiple Accounts are Associated with a Player.

Rowe et al. (US 2002/0039921 A1) – Method and Apparatus for Monitoring Player Loss in a Gaming Environment.

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until

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after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Christian E. Rendón whose telephone number is 571-272-3117. The examiner can normally be reached on 9 - 5pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Robert E. Pezzuto can be reached on 571-272-6996. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Christian E Rendón
Examiner
Art Unit 3714

CER

Ronald Rendón
Primary Examiner
4/12/07